

Q1. If the land our family cemetery is located on is sold, can we still be buried there and have access to the gravesites?

A1. A private cemetery is any cemetery or burial plot on Fort Polk that, regardless of present ownership, was initially owned by a person or agency other than the federal government. Therefore, even if the federal government acquired title to the underlying land, the cemetery remains a private cemetery under Army policy. Because of this fact, the Army owes certain duties to the family, church, or private cemetery association that has an interest in the burial sites and to the next of kin of the individuals buried there. Access and visitation rights continue, but must be coordinated with Fort Polk. Rights to continued burial must be negotiated with the Corps of Engineers at the time of purchase.

Q2. When the Corps of Engineers receives the three appraisals, will they use the highest appraisal to begin negotiations?

A2. The Corps of Engineers will normally obtain one appraisal. A second appraisal is only obtained in rare cases when the agency's review appraiser sees problems with the first appraisal that can not be reconciled. If more than one appraisal is obtained the appraisal that has best supporting documentation will be used to determine official Fair Market Value. Once determined, the Corps of Engineers will use the Fair Market Value as a basis to negotiate Just Compensation with the land owner. Just Compensation is the actual price the agency will pay to acquire real property. By law, the Just Compensation cannot be lower than the approved Fair Market Value. Just compensation includes structures, timber and mineral rights, roads, water etc., depending upon the estate to be acquired.

Q3. Is there a provision to accommodate a quick increase in price as this process goes along?

A3. By law, the appraiser must disregard the influence of the future public project on the value of the property. The property will be appraised based upon Fair Market Value at the time when the offer is made.

Q4. Will this process affect the Homestead Exception?

A4. No. The Homestead Exemption is a Louisiana tax exemption that provides homeowners a tax break on the first \$75,000 in value of your home. The value of your home is exempt from state and parish property taxes up to \$75,000.

Q5. Will the Army build cross-over points on Hwy 8 and Hwy 28?

A5. No. There are no crossover points or tunnels budgeted or planned as part of the Fort Polk land purchase program.

Q6. Will this land purchase cross into Rapides Parish?

A6. We are looking primarily at the parcels depicted on the map in blue. Land in Rapides Parish is not under consideration, but there is no prohibition in this program against purchases there.

Q7. Will we still have access to the two churches within the proposed area after the purchase?

A7. Yes. You will have access to these two churches, if needed.

Q8. Why not use Camp Claiborne?

A8. We are looking to purchase property contiguous to currently owned land. At this time, the land in the vicinity of Camp Claiborne does not meet the current criteria.

Q9. If I fall outside the proposed area, will the Army still be interested in buying my land?

A9. This would be decided on a case-by-case basis. We will not know the exact property we want to purchase until the completion of the NEPA process.

Q10. What happens if I am the only person in my area that does not sell?

A10. If one area is not available for purchase from willing sellers, we will look to another area. Enclaves within the training area are not desirable.

Q11. There are four timber companies in the proposed area. What if they don't sell?

A11. All sellers, including timber companies, must be willing sellers. They will be handled in the same manner as private landowners.

Q12. How long after we sell will we have to move?

A12. There is no set time to vacate the property if you decide to sell. This will be part of your negotiations with the Army Corps of Engineers.

Q13. Will the government pay our moving expenses?

A13. This is part of the negotiation process that takes place with the Army Corps of Engineers prior to the sale.

Q14. At this time can we still make private purchases of land in the proposed area?

A14. Yes, there are no restrictions on the sale or transfer of property between buyers and sellers. This would cover sales or inheritances.

Q15. If you don't get this land, what is the future of Fort Polk?

A15. The future of Fort Polk is brighter than ever. This land will allow us to enhance the training of our sons and daughters prior to going into harms way. If we did not get an acre, we would figure out some way to continue to train.

Q16. If this project is so important, why isn't the government willing to pay more than fair market value?

A16. The Fair Market Value is where the negotiation starts – but as good stewards of the taxpayer dollars, the Army Corps of Engineers will negotiate a fair price for the property.

Q17. Can we meet with the Corps of Engineer representatives?

A17. The Army Corps of Engineers will conduct landowner meetings following the completion of the NEPA process. We will not know the exact properties we are interested in purchasing until that time.

Q18. After you get your 100,000 acres, will Fort Polk expand again in the future?

A18. At this time, we are authorized to purchase up to 100,000 acres in this land purchase program. I do not know what will happen in the future.

Q19. Do I have to wait until 2010 to be contacted by the Army about selling?

A19. The Corps of Engineers will not begin negotiations with landowners until the NEPA process is complete.

Q20. What will be the impact to Simpson and Hicks schools if all the people sell and all the children leave? Will they have to close?

A20. It is too early in the process to tell whether the student population will be affected by this Land Purchase Program. Once we've actually purchased parcels of land, then the Vernon Parish School Board will be able to assess the number of students affected. At that point, the school board will develop attendance plans for both of these schools, if needed.

Q21. Will your replacement be as committed as you to the process?

A21. Yes he or she will. I have been here for seven months and plan to stay for two years. By the time I leave the principles used to start this process and the preliminary public meetings will be complete.

Q22. What will you do if the price per acre increases because people don't sell?

A22. I can't predict the future, but the Corps of Engineers will negotiate fair market value.

Q23. If somebody doesn't sell, can they still pass their land to their children?

A23. Yes. This land purchase program does not affect property rights.

Q24. If you live where the grid is (built up area), will you still be safe?

A24. You are plenty safe. You will be just as safe as you are if you live between post and Peason (Ridge) today.

Q25. Will you host a meeting in Hicks?

A25. If needed. Since I was asked to speak at these special meetings of the Police Jury, I will leave the scheduling of additional meeting to them, but I would be happy to speak at addition meetings if requested.

Q26. I own land on both sides of the tank trail and am not going to sell. What are you going to do about it?

A26. We will continue to use the tank trail in the same fashion we do now. Again, we are looking for willing sellers, and if individuals are not willing to sell, we will look elsewhere.

Q27. Will timber be harvested on the land you want to buy?

A27. Fort Polk training lands are owned by two federal agencies: the U.S. Army and the U. S. Forest Service. A Special Use Permit Authorization allows the Army to conduct training on 100,000 acres of the Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana. These lands are administratively controlled by the US Forest Service. The U.S. Forest Service conducts timber management on their lands and carries out timber harvesting under rigid regulations to meet public needs for recreation, economic development, and fire control.

Fort Polk training lands total about 100,000 acres owned in fee-title by the U.S. Department of Defense. About 80,000 acres are suitable for forestry operations and these lands are managed for multiple purposes: military training is the first priority for land use, provision of habitat for endangered species, natural biodiversity and game management, and sales of forest products follow in order of priority. A comprehensive forest inventory for Fort Polk's Army owned land is maintained and revised yearly to support sound forest management decisions. Fort Polk's Garrison staff of 14 professional foresters provides wild fire control, prescribed burning, enhancement of forested habitat for game and endangered species, timber marking, administration of timber harvesting, and other natural resources tasks.

Timber harvesting decisions are based on several criteria: resultant benefit to military training landscape, improvement in endangered species habitat, and maintenance of a healthy ecosystem for game and non-game wildlife populations. While the harvesting of timber does provide timber to the local forest products, it is not the prime reason the timber is harvested.

Any additional land purchased by the U.S. Army to support Fort Polk will be required to have an initial assessment/inventory by the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Division. These assessments /inventories will gather information regarding cultural resources, plant/animal communities and forest inventories. Timber harvesting will be considered only after this data is gathered and a need is identified to support the total mission requirements.

For all timber sold on Army fee-owned lands, 40-percent of the net profit is returned to local parish school boards and police juries. The returns to each parish within which Fort Polk lies are prorated based upon the acreage within each parish boundary. In FY 08, a total of \$203,200 was returned to Vernon, Natchitoches, and Sabine Parishes.

A detailed analysis of socio-economic impacts will be conducted and included in the forth coming Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The analysis will include impacts to available jobs in the region of influence (Sabine, Natchitoches, Vernon, Rapides, and Beauregard) tax base in the region of influence and total economic impact from the proposed action. This EIS will afford opportunities for public comment and review and will culminate in a Record of Decision that will be published in the Federal Register.